

[P. 375, A]

RITUAL ACTIVITIES

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Few, if any, Washo activities do not contain an element which we can describe as religious, supernatural, or magical. This element is most commonly revealed by specifically ritualized behavior carried on while a regular course of action is being taken by a Washo. The following sections will deal with this ritualized behavior and the rationale for it offered by the Washo.

CONCEPTION AND CONTRACEPTION

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Apparently the Washo have no specific ritual to encourage conception. They are extremely fond of children and desire as many as possible. No Washo has ever heard of, or will admit having heard of, infanticide among the Washo, although they have heard of the practice among other Indians. The birth of an illegitimate child, despite the attitude of whites, is greeted with as much joy as that of a legitimate child.

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However, it is believed that conception can be prevented by manipulation of the afterbirth. When the afterbirth is expelled it is wrapped in a piece of deer hide or cloth and buried. It is always placed right side up if a woman desires to continue bearing children. If she wishes not to have children it is buried upside down. If at a later time she wishes to become pregnant, she will turn the earth where the upside-down afterbirth was buried. Informants say that not many people do this any more, mainly because younger women go to the hospital to have their babies, but that many people know how and some may still do it.

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Certain Indians are reported to be able to prevent the birth of children without the knowledge of the woman concerned. This requires the cooperation of a woman who has just had a child and who will give the magician the afterbirth. It is then buried or hidden upside down and the woman concerned will not become pregnant. The method of transferring the influence of the afterbirth from the real mother to the victim was not explained, and in fact the practice was revealed with a good deal of reluctance.

BIRTH

(2178-2293)

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Informants report that the baby was not touched, either by the mother or her attendants, until the afterbirth was expelled. The birth and recuperation were carried out in a pit filled with warm ashes. A slow birth was blamed on the belief that the mother had slept too much or been lazy during her pregnancy.

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The mother was not allowed to eat salt until the baby's umbilicus dropped off, usually in two or three days. The umbilicus was dried and hung on the right side of the cradleboard to insure that the baby would be right-handed.

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The baby's hair was cut about thirty days after its birth. Until that time the mother was not permitted to eat meat or to leave her bed of ashes. However, one of my informants who had borne eight children claimed never to have spent more than two weeks in her lying-in bed. She did insist that "in the old days" women adhered to the traditional thirty-day period.

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A feast terminated the period (one or two months) during which the mother was not permitted to eat meat. Gifts were given away and it was particularly important for the grandparents to be present, the food being passed to them first. The mother at this feast ate meat again and a little ritual was performed for the baby.

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The baby was often rubbed with soft sagebrush, which after use was thrown eastward. If it was a girl her forehead and cheeks were painted with red ochre. If it was a boy his nose and chin were painted with a white pigment (dipek).

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The first cradle was used on the day of birth and a new cradle was used after each bath during the mother's confinement. These temporary cradles are quite different from the permanent cradles in having an oval back, woven sides at the head end, and no hood in front or crossbars on the back. The temporary cradles are not used today and are rarely seen.

The baby was placed in its first permanent basketry cradle at the end of the mother's confinement, and new larger cradles were used as the child grew. Up to five cradles may have been used before the child began to walk. The hood or sunshade (maty6'dop) of the cradle had pendants of shell or beads suspended from the front "to prevent the child from becoming cross-eyed." Hank Pete said that the baby's umbilical cord was tied to the front of the hood for this purpose. The hood still carries a design of parallel diagonal lines for a boy and a continuous zigzag or diamond chain design for a girl.

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A sagebrush bark pad was placed in the cradle and the infant, wrapped in a small rabbitskin robe, was placed over this and lashed to the cradle with buckskin. A buckskin strap was attached to the back of the cradle and passed over the forehead of the woman who carried it.

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If a miscarriage occurred the fetus was disposed of in the same manner as the placenta and umbilical cord and the same beliefs attended this act. One woman was careless enough to allow her mother-in-law, who was angry with her, to see the disposal of the fetus. It was believed that the mother-in-law had either destroyed it or turned it over and buried it in another place, because this woman never had another child and was in poor health after the miscarriage.

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A stillborn baby was buried in warmed ground and the baby basket was placed in the crotch of a tree, or merely thrown away. Abortion was effected by applying pressure to the abdomen. The men are said to have objected to this.

5. Sasie Dick made one of these cradles for Grace Danyberg.

There is considerable variation with respect to beliefs about twins. Lowie (1939, 305) wrote that "People liked twins and sometimes laughed at one of them, saying 'That man does more work than others' (because he is double)." Susie Dick reported that Sadie had twins and one was buried alive. Manta said that one of a pair of twins always died, and that when she buried one of her twins the other one had died in sympathy. Another informant said that one of a pair of twins died at birth in Waco Valley, and that it was generally bad luck to have twins.

If the mother would not tell who the father of a newborn child was, the child may have been allowed to die. A few informants deny this, but some say that if the mother desired to keep the child she was always free to do so.

Lowie (1939, 305) wrote that "A barren woman sometimes adopted her cousin's child and kept it for good. If a woman died in childbirth, her mother took care of the infant."

Certain positions of sexual intercourse were considered better for producing boys and certain for girls. Also a game of string figures like "cat's cradle" was played by women to determine the sex of an offspring.

Girl's Puberty

When a young girl between 12 and 14 years of age first began to menstruate (*gumiahaum*) she told her mother. This started a several week period of ritual observances that would officially see her through the change from a girl to a marriageable woman. This ritual prepared her for her life as a woman, generally, and for proper behavior during menstruation in particular.

Any menstruation involved certain proscriptions, just as did all excretion. One should bury body wastes of all kinds. One should not spit in the fire or burn finger nails. When the hair is cut off it should be thrown in a stream, or buried with a wrapping of sagebrush bark deep in the mud. But burning was prohibited. It would be a terrible thing to burn a baby's feces, for example.

Whenever menstruation occurs the woman is forbidden salt, meat, fish, or fat of any kind. The flow lasts longer for those who eat meat. She should not scratch herself. When her menstruation is over she should wash in cold water, but to drink or bathe in cold water during menstruation would cause sickness. Eating ice cream today by menstruating women is sometimes explained as the cause of sicknesses.

Washo NT20
Achomawi NS5

CULTURE ELEM. DISTRIB.: XIV--STEWART: NORTHERN PAIUTE

	To	K1	K2	K3	To	To	Pa	At	Sm	Tg	N4	K1	At
2246. Treatment of father: bathed	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2247. Not bath at birth	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2248. Cold bath at birth	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2249. Bathed by another man	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2250. Runn after bath	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2250a. Runn before bath	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2254. Father forbidden meat, grease 5 days	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2254a. During wife's confinement	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2254b. Indefinite period	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2256. Salt forbidden 5 days	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2256a. Smoking forbidden	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2257. Gambling forbidden	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2258. Sweat bath forbidden	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2259. Father must: run daily	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2260. For 5 days	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2260a. 10	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2260b. 30	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2262. Run any direction	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2262a. Run to water	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2263. Run in morning	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2267. Bring back firewood from run	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2268. Use scratching stick	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2269. Baths on day of birth	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2270. Do housework	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2271. Father at end of observance gets new clothes	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2272. Gives away old clothes	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2273. Throws away old clothes	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2274. Bathes	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2275. Paints self red	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2276. Hunts	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2277. Gives away first kill	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2278. Father's requirements observed: at all births	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2279. For 1st child only	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2280. For 1st of each sex only	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2281. Parents continent: 1-3 months	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2281a. 3-6 months	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2281b. 6-12 months	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
<u>Twins</u>													
2282. Twins feared	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2283. Twins regarded as good luck	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2284. 1 twin killed	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2285. Death of 1 twin brings death of other	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2286. Mother's sister adopts 1 twin	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2286a. Twins considered illegitimate	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
<u>Infanticide</u>													
2287. Deformed infant killed	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2288. Unwanted infant killed	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2289. Illegitimate infant killed	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2290. Killing: By sitting on	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2291. By putting in badger hole	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2292. By leaving outdoors	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2292a. Any way	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2293. Abortion	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2294. By pressure	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2295. By lying on rock	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

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846N
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[p.409]